



# ACTS

Of All the Apostles

**You Will Be  
My Witnesses:**

**Running the Race**

**Lesson 34**



# Paul in Athens

Acts 17:16-34

## Supplemental Scripture

Hebrews 12:1-3

**NOTE:** Familiarize yourself with this story. Study the supplemental Scripture and make notes on, but do NOT read from, these pages. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

## Memory Verse

There is only one God, and Christ Jesus is the only one who can bring us to God. Jesus was truly human, and He gave Himself to rescue all of us.  
1 Timothy 2:5 (CEV)

Have you ever wondered why you live in the time period you live in? Have you ever wondered why you live where you live or why you were born to the family you have been born to? Maybe you don't like your school or your community and wonder why you have to participate with those around you. Let's see what Paul had to say about the life and times we live in.

When we last looked at Paul's second missionary journey, he was in the city of Berea. It was there that the people listened to Paul and then examined the Scriptures to make sure that everything Paul said was true. Many there believed, but the Jews who refused to believe caused trouble. Berean men helped Paul escape to Athens and sent a message to Silas and Timothy to come soon.

## Lesson Goals

Understand that Paul was aware of his surrounding

"The longer Paul waited in Athens for Silas and Timothy, the angrier he got—all those idols! The city was a junkyard of idols." (Acts 17:16 MSG) There were idols in the marketplace and idols along the streets. They even lined the way to the Acropolis, or "high city," where the Greek goddess Athena was worshipped.\*

Understand that Paul used what he saw around him to tell about Jesus

Paul visited the synagogue in Athens and he talked to the Greeks and Jews who worshipped God. Paul also went to the market place and he talked with anyone who happened to be there. That included a group of men who taught about religion, not as something to be believed in that changes your life, but as another subject. These men were known as Stoics and Epicureans. Paul told them all about Jesus. He shared the good news and preached that Jesus rose from the dead. Well, that did it for some of them! Neither the Stoics nor the Epicureans believed in the kind of resurrection that Paul was talking about. "Others said, 'He seems to be telling us about gods we've never heard of.'" (Acts 17:18b NIV)

Understand that God chose this time and this place for us to be alive so that we will seek Him

"All the people of Athens spent their time talking about and listening to the latest ideas. People from other lands who lived there did the same." (Acts 17:21 NIV) Those who wanted to hear more took Paul "to a meeting of the Areopagus." The Areopagus was not only the name of a hill of marble also known as "Mars Hill," it was also the name of a group of community leaders who made decisions for the city. "There they said to him, 'What is this new teaching you're giving us? You have some

## Application

Do you remember the questions at the beginning of this lesson? Have you ever wondered why you live in this place at this time? Paul was pretty clear when he spoke on Mars Hill. God decided exactly when we should live and where.

“God did this so that people would seek Him. then perhaps they would reach out for Him and find Him.” (Acts 17:26-27 NlrV)

You live during this time in history in this place because God wants you to seek Him. Have you? If you have, do you realize that He loves you so much that He sent His One and only Son to take the punishment for sin that you deserve? He did it to be the way for you to get to God.

If you haven't sought God, why not? What is holding you back? Step out in faith for the God that wants to be known to you today.

strange ideas. We've never heard them before. We want to know what they mean.” (Acts 17: 19b-20 NlrV) Then Paul stood up before them and began to speak. He talked to them about what he had noticed around town, all of the idols. He shared that they were very religious. He had even seen an idol inscribed “to an unknown god.” Paul told them who that God is. “He is the God who made the world. He also made everything in it. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn't live in temples made by human hands.” (Acts 17:24 NlrV) Paul explained that God “Himself gives life and breath to all people. He also gives them everything they have.” (Acts 17:25b NlrV) Paul continued explaining that where we live and when we live is all decided by the God who made us and it happens that way so that we will seek Him. Then Paul said, “One of your poets said it well: ‘We're the God-created.’ Well, if we are the God-created, it doesn't make a lot of sense to think we could hire a sculptor to chisel a god out of stone for us, does it?” (Acts 17:29 MSG) Paul shared with them that now the unknown god was known and He calls for people to turn away from their sins. He has set a day to judge the earth and He has chosen the one who will do it. It is His Son, Jesus, who rose from the dead.

And just as with the Stoics and Epicureans, some people wanted to hear nothing else about resurrection from the dead. They laughed at Paul and left. “Others said, ‘Let's do this again. We want to hear more.’ But that was it for the day, and Paul left. There were still others, it turned out, who were convinced then and there.” (Acts 17:33-34a MSG) They believed in Jesus. “Dionysius was one of them. He was a member of the Areopagus. A woman named Damaris also became a believer. And so did some others.” (Acts 17:34 NlrV)

## Review

1. Where did Paul go after he left Berea? (Athens)
2. What did Paul see while in Athens? (He saw idols everywhere.)
3. What did Paul do while in Athens? (He went to the synagogue. He also went to the marketplace and talked to anyone he happened to meet.)
4. What did Paul say to the people about the unknown god? (That He is now known and that He is creator of heaven and earth.)

\* Orr, James, M.A., D.D. General Editor. “Definition for ‘AREOPAGUS’”. “International Standard Bible Encyclopedia”. bible-history.com - ISBE; 1915.

Next Week  
Corinth  
Acts 18:1-22

# Preschool Lesson

When we last saw Paul, he was in the city of Berea. The people in Berea listened to Paul and then studied their Bible to make sure that everything Paul said was true. Many there believed, but the Jews who refused to believe caused trouble. Men from Berea helped Paul escape to Athens and sent a message to Silas and Timothy to come soon.

“The longer Paul waited in Athens for Silas and Timothy, the angrier he got—all those idols!” (Acts 17:16 MSG) There were idols in the marketplace and idols along the streets. They even lined the way up the hill to where the Greek goddess Athena was worshipped.\*

Paul visited the synagogue in Athens and he talked to the people who worshipped God. Paul also went to the market place and he talked with anyone who happened to be there. Paul told them all about Jesus. He shared the good news and preached that Jesus rose from the dead. He talked to them about what he had noticed around town, all of the idols. He had even seen an idol inscribed “to an unknown god.” Paul told them who that God is. “He is the God who made the world. He also made everything in it. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn’t live in temples made by human hands.” (Acts 17:24 NIV) Paul explained that God “Himself gives life and breath to all people. He also gives them everything they have.” (Acts 17:25b NIV) Paul continued explaining that where we live and when we live is all decided by the God who made us and it happens that way so that we will look for Him.

Then Paul said, “One of your poets said it well: ‘We’re the God-created.’ Well, if we are the God-created, it doesn’t make a lot of sense to think we could hire a sculptor to chisel a god out of stone for us, does it?” (Acts 17:29 MSG) Paul shared with them that now the unknown god was known and He calls for people to turn away from their sins.

Some people laughed at Paul and left. “Others said, ‘Let’s do this again. We want to hear more.’ But that was it for the day, and Paul left. There were still others, it turned out, who were convinced then and there.” (Acts 17:33-34a MSG) They believed in Jesus. “Dionysius was one of them. He was a member of the Areopagus. A woman named Damaris also became a believer. And so did some others.” (Acts 17:34 NIV)

# Activities

**Memory Verse Activity** - Make copies of the letters of the Greek Alphabet. Practice copying the letters. Write the memory verse using the style of the Greek scribes of long ago. Write all the letters as capital letters leaving no space between words.

Recreate the Athenian marketplace (Agora) in your Bible Study area. Set up market stalls with pottery, sandals, Greek toys like juggling balls and tops, produce, etc.

Wear togas! Provide white sheets to drape over your students. Reenact the story.

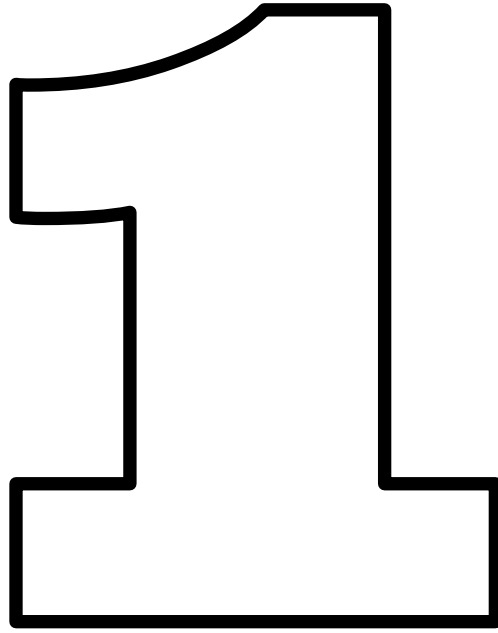
Bring Greek food. (Some ideas: Gyros, Baklava, olives, or natural yogurt with honey.)

Recreate the Acropolis and Parthenon. Use modeling clay. Or invert a Styrofoam bowl and construct the Parthenon from mini-marshmallows.

Bring a rare type of fruit or vegetable to class. Give your students a chance to identify the object. When it has been determined that the object is “unknown” to everyone, discuss the “unknown god” that Paul shared with the Athenians. God is real, but he may be unknown to some of the people we know. Encourage your students to share with them about the one true God.

**Dig Deeper:** Look up information about the Epicureans and the Stoics. Discuss the different reactions to Paul’s message.

Continue memorizing Hebrews 12:1-3. Think about that “cloud of witnesses” cheering us on. Discuss Paul’s role in our lives.



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and Christ Jesus is the only one  
who can bring us to God.

Jesus was truly human,  
and He gave Himself  
to rescue all of us.

1 Timothy 2:5

# Racing Riddles

What unusual thing did Paul find in Athens? Unscramble the letters below to find out.



Paul found an altar to

“ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

n a k o n n u w n o d g

(for help read Acts 17:23)

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# Word Search

r o g a n y s l e b s e p s m  
e a s o t h g l o y l n o o a  
s s e t i n d a w e l f n r r  
c h r i s t j e s u s l a u e  
u h n m o l v u r m y e m t e  
e t s o t a e c a o a s u p s  
a o s t h s i s n e n m h i s  
l m u h y e i e r i a i y r c  
e i g y f n g r a n g h l c u  
v t n i e o b a r n o e u s e  
e h i r d y y n a h g v r y b  
i t r u l l y h u m c a t d e  
c s b r i n g u s t o g o d j  
e e p l l o m e n u t r o t p  
r m e s s a g e t y l l i s f

There is \_\_\_\_\_,  
and \_\_\_\_\_ is the \_\_\_\_\_  
who can \_\_\_\_\_.  
Jesus was \_\_\_\_\_,  
and He \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ of us.  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2:5

# Word Search

r o g a n y s l e b s e p s m  
e a s o t h g l o y l n o o a  
s s e t i n d a w e l f n r r  
c h r i s t j e s u s l a u e  
u h n m o l v u r m y e m t e  
e t s o t a e c a o a s u p s  
a o s t h s i s n e n m h i s  
l m u h y e i e r i a i y r c  
e i g y f n g r a n g h l c u  
v t n i e o b a r n o e u s e  
e h i r d y y n a h g v r y b  
i t r u l l y h u m c a t d e  
c s b r i n g u s t o g o d j  
e e p l l o m e n u t r o t p  
r m e s s a g e t y l l i s f

There is only one God,  
and Christ Jesus is the only one  
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Jesus was truly human,  
and He gave Himself to rescue all of us.

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